

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8152

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

PORT OF SPAIN 1280

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT VC

SUBJ: CATO'S ST. VINCENT LABOUR PARTY WINS LANDSLIDE VICTORY IN
GENERAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. BRIDGETOWN 2089, B. BRIDGETOWN 2088

1. AS PREDICTED IN REF B, THE ST. VINCENT LABOUR PARTY LED BY FORMER PREMIER R. MILTON CATO HAS WON A LANDSLIDE VICTORY IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD DECEMBER 9. CATO'S SVLP WON TEN OF THE ELEVEN SEATS CONTESTED IN THE THIRTEEN-SEAT HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. FORMER DEPUTY PREMIER EBENEZER T. JOSHUA'S PEOPLE'S POLITICAL PARTY -- ALLIED TO THE SVLP IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS -- WON TWO OF THE THREE SEATS CONTESTED. JOSHUA AND HIS WIFE IVY WERE BOTH RETURNED, WHILE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS CLIVE TANNIS WHOSE SEAT WAS NOT COVERED BY THE CATO-JOSHUA "DEAL" LOST HIS BID FOR RE-ELECTION ON THE PPP TICKET. THOUGH WITH MUCH DIFFICULTY, AS EXPECTED, PREMIER JAMES F. MITCHELL WON HIS SEAT IN A CLOSE RACE WITH A NEWCOMER TO VINCENTIAN POLITICS, DR. SIDNEY GUN-MUNRO, WHO NEVERTHELESS PROVED TO BE A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT. VOTING IN
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ST. VINCENT WAS DESCRIBED AS EXTREMELY LIGHT COMPARED TO THE 75

PERCENT OF THE VOTERS WHO TURNED OUT FOR THE 1972 GENERAL ELECTIONS.

2. COMMENT: CATO, WHO WAS PREMIER FROM 1967-1972, NOW HAS A CLEAR MANDATE TO FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. WITH AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THE HOUSE, HE IS IN A POSITION TO ACCOMPLISH THE BROAD-BASED PLAN FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OUTLINED IN HIS PARTY'S ELECTION MANIFESTO. THE SVLP'S MANIFESTO CALLED FOR "FULL INDEPENDENCE WITHIN FIVE YEARS" (REF A), DEVELOPING AGRO-INDUSTRIES, RETURNING THE COUNTRY TO SUGAR PRODUCTION, ENCOURAGING FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN LIGHT INDUSTRIES WHICH OFFER LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND TECHNICAL TRAINING, AND SUPPORT FOR CO-OPERATIVES AND SELF-HELP PROJECTS. IT ALSO PROMISED A PRICE CONTROL SYSTEM FOR CONSUMER PRODUCTS.

3. EBENEZER JOSHUA, THOUGH NOW COMMANDING ONLY TWO VOTES IN THE HOUSE VS SIX AFTER THE 1972 ELECTIONS, CAN DRAW SOME SATISFACTION FROM THE CURRENT ELECTION RESULTS. JOSHUA, WHOM MANY OBSERVERS CONSIDERED FINISHED IN POLITICS AFTER HE BROUGHT DOWN THE MITCHELL-PPP ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT IN SEPTEMBER, PROVED TO THE PPP "REBELS" INCLUDING MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKS OTHNELL R. SYLVESTER, HEALTH MINISTER VICTOR I. CUFFY, AND EDUCATION MINISTER ALPHONSO A. DENNIS AND EVEN "FENCE STRADDLING" HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER CLIVE TANNIS THAT THEY COULD NOT BE ELECTED WITHOUT HIS WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT.

4. FORMER PREMIER JAMES F. MITCHELL, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE RESULTS COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE ONLY IF HE HAD LOST HIS OWN ELECTION BID. CONDEMNED TO PLAY THE MINOR ROLE OF AN INDEPENDENT BACK-BENCHER FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, HE MAY WELL DECIDE TO QUIT POLITICS ALTOGETHER.
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